BRITISH COLUMBIA
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BCStats

Infoline

Contact: bcstats.infoline@gov.bc.ca *Issue: 11-16* *April 21st, 2011*

- **Inflation rate climbs to 3.1% in March, as rising energy and food prices push costs up**
- **Retail sales edge up 0.7% in February; Wholesale sales slip 0.5%**
- **British Columbians spent an average of $792 on beer, wine and spirits in 2010**

Prices

- **British Columbia's year-over-year inflation rate was 3.1% in March, up from the 1.8% rate posted in February.** Rising energy prices (+11.6%) were the main reason for the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) relative to March, 2010. Excluding energy from the CPI, inflation in BC was 2.3%.

  The price of owned accommodation (+1.2%) continued to climb in March, as did rental costs (+1.7%). British Columbians paid more for most utilities, with electricity (+8.9%), water (+8.8%) and fuel oil (+25.0%) all up from a year ago.

  Prices for traveller accommodation returned closer to levels recorded prior to the 2010 Winter Olympics, sliding a further 3.1% in the 12-months to March, after a 38.1% plunge in February.

  A rise in the cost of food purchased at restaurants (+6.9%) coupled with an increase in prices at grocery stores (+3.1%) pushed food prices up 4.5% higher than in March of last year. Fresh vegetables (+14.6%) took a much larger slice out of household budgets, as did meat (+4.2%).

  Clothing & footwear prices were on the slide, down 1.1% from where they were a year ago. However, the cost of health & personal care (+3.0%) was up moderately.

  Increased maintenance costs (+0.6%) and continued jumps in the price of gasoline (+16.3%) pushed the cost of operating an automobile (+7.5%) up substantially. This drove transportation costs higher (+5.3%), despite a slight decline in the price of purchasing or leasing an automobile (-0.3%). Public transportation shot up 9.9% over March of last year, while private transport was also notably higher (+4.6%).

  The inflation rate in Victoria (+2.9%) was slightly below the provincial average, while the rise in Vancouver's price level (+3.0%) was relatively in line with the rest of BC.

  Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Compared to the same month a year earlier, the inflation rate in Canada rose 3.3% in March, mostly because of higher energy (+12.8%) costs.** Consumer prices increased in all provinces, most notably in Nova Scotia (+3.9%) and Ontario (+3.6%).

  Data Source: Statistics Canada

The Economy

- **Total retail sales in the province inched up 0.7% (*seasonally adjusted*) in February, erasing the slip at the beginning of the year (-0.5% in January).** Canadian sales were also slightly higher (+0.4%), largely the result of higher volume (in volume terms, sales were up 0.4%). Quebec (-0.8%) and parts of Atlantic Canada bucked the national trend by posting losses in February. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **British Columbia's wholesalers saw sales edge down 0.5% in February, following a solid increase recorded in January (+3.0%).** Nationally, the upward trend also eased, with wholesale sales dropping 0.6%, on the heels of a moderate boost in the previous month (+1.6% in January). Four of the seven main sub-sectors reported lower sales figures.

Report

Next Week – Trading Up: From Apprenticeship to Employment

Did you know...

Most (67%) BC consumers feel a retailer's environmental actions are an important consideration when deciding where to shop. Source: Ipsos Canada

While Newfoundland & Labrador (-5.0%), Nova Scotia (-2.7%) and Saskatchewan (-2.5%) bore the brunt of the downturn in February, Ontario (+0.1%) and New Brunswick (+0.3%) were the only two provinces to post gains.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **The number of Employment Insurance (EI) recipients receiving regular benefits in British Columbia was 74,350 (*seasonally adjusted*) in February, a decline of 1.8% (or 1,380) over the previous month.** Only PEI (+0.1%) saw an increase in the number receiving regular benefits, such that nationally, the decrease was 1.3%. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

Tourism

- **The number of foreign residents travelling to Canada via British Columbia dropped (−5.1%) in February, the biggest monthly decline registered since March 2010.**

While overnight travel by US-residents was up marginally (+0.2%) during the month, the volume of same-day travel slumped (-3.7%), driving total US entries down (−1.1%). However, most of the decline came as a result of a plummeting number of travellers from overseas locations (−17.2%), particularly those from Asia (-19.1%), BC's largest source of non-US entries. Entries from Japan were notably higher in February (+10.3%), but the number of travellers arriving from Hong Kong (-38.4%), Taiwan (−15.5%), China (−11.1%) and South Korea (−7.6%) was significantly lower than the previous month. No less significant was the double-digit decline in the volume of visitors from both Europe (-15.0%) and Oceania (−16.7%).

International travel to Canada slipped 3.0% in February, largely due to a drop (-1.6%) in the number of excursions by US residents. After a double-digit slump in entries during the previous month, foreign travel to Newfoundland & Labrador (+47.0%) surged ahead in February. The only other province to register an increase in entries was Manitoba (+7.2%). The remaining provinces saw a decline in foreign travel, the largest of which was seen in Nova Scotia (−8.2%) and BC (−5.1%).

Data Source: BC Stats & Statistics Canada

- **Food services and drinking places in the province recorded a solid 1.2% increase (to $7.3 billion) in operating revenues in 2009.** By comparison, Canadian revenues were up 0.7% over the same period. BC's share of total revenues in this industry (16%) is substantially higher than its share of the population (13%). Tourism, consumer preferences, and possible differences in prices and types of food purchased may all help explain this disparity.

Sales of food and non-alcoholic beverages represent about 79% of all food service revenue in British Columbia, with alcohol accounting for 17% of the total. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

Beer, Wine and Spirits

- **British Columbians aged 15 years and over spent an average of $792 on beer, wine and spirits in 2010.** While Newfoundland & Labrador ($953) was the only province with higher per capita sales of alcoholic beverages than BC, spending in the Yukon ($1,272) and Northwest Territories including Nunavut ($946) was also well above the national average ($709).

Beer ($323) remained the most popular alcoholic beverage in BC, followed by wines ($251) and spirits ($218). Nationally, per capita sales of beer ($326) dominated the market and were up a solid 3.8% from 2009 levels. Although wines ($208) and spirits ($175) each accounted for a smaller share of spending in Canada, sales also climbed (+3.1% and +0.7%, respectively).

Provincial and territorial liquor authorities earned $5.6 billion from sales of alcoholic beverages in 2010, up 2.5% from 2009. With the exception of BC (-1.5% to $887 million) all provinces recorded revenue gains, most notably PEI (+6.6%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

For data originating from Statistics Canada, data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the catalogue number.

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also on the Internet at www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca or choose RSS

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jan 1/2011	% change on one year ago
BC	4,554.1	1.2
Canada	34,278.4	1.1
GDP and INCOME (Released Nov 4)		
(BC - at market prices)	2009	% change on one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	191,006	-3.4
GDP *($ 2002 millions)*	161,851	-1.8
GDP *($ 2002 per Capita) (reflects revised pop)*	36,287	-3.5
Personal Disposable Income *($ 2002 per Capita)*	25,374	-1.9
TRADE ($ millions, seasonally adjusted)		% change on prev. month
Manufacturing Shipments - Feb 2011	3,176	0.9
Merchandise Exports - Feb 2011	2,581	-3.4
Retail Sales - Feb 2011	4,839	0.7
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX	% change on	12-month avg
(all items - Mar 2011)	one year ago	% change
BC	3.1	1.8
Vancouver	3.0	2.1
Victoria	2.9	1.4
Canada	3.3	2.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		
(seasonally adjusted)	Mar 2011	% change on prev. month
Jobs Created (-Lost) - BC	3.5	
Labour Force - BC	2,464.0	-0.6
Employed - BC	2,264.0	0.2
Unemployed - BC	200.0	-8.1
		Feb 2011
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.1	8.8
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	7.7	7.8
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Apr 20/2011	Apr 21/2010
Prime Business Rate	3.00	2.25
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	3.70	3.60
- 5 year	5.69	6.10
US-CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Apr 20/2011	Apr 21/2010
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $ per US $	0.9524	0.9984
(closing rate) US $ per Cdn $	1.0490	1.0008
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Mar 2011	% change on one year ago
BC	827.55	0.9
Canada	836.77	2.9

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bankofcanada.ca

File Finder

BC Stats has created a powerful new tool to find small area data on the web site. Users can filter on an area type or a specific location, time period, product, and subject. The File Finder app is still very much under development and only a few products have been linked into it as yet, but it is already quite useful so we decided to share it with you and ask you to help guide its further development. File Finder locates data files. If you are looking to search through our articles use the top bar tab called Analytical Reports.

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/filefinder.asp

Canada Votes – Know Your Riding

On May 2nd Canadians head to the polls. Our Federal Electoral District profiles will help you to understand the characteristics that define your constituency.

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/profiles/detailed/ch_fed.asp

BC Post-Secondary Student Outcomes - Trends in Employment

Every year, respondents to the Diploma, Associate Degree, and Certificate Student Outcomes (DACSO) Survey are asked a series of questions about their current employment. This paper looks at trends in employment characteristics between 1999 and 2009. The analysis uses data from approximately 6,100 to 8,200 employed former students from Applied programs per year and 750 to 1,600 employed former Arts and Sciences students per year. For more information on BC Student Outcomes, visit BC Student Outcomes

http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Libraries/DACSO_Papers/Trends_in_Employment_pdf.pdf

Released this week by BC Stats

- Consumer Price Index, March 2011

Next week

- Business Indicators, April 2011

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